

taminated water; however, he is quick to point out that experimental subjects have been fed cholera vibrio organisms without developing disease. There are many factors needed, other than the causative organism, to effect an epidemic.

Dr. Dubos casts his lot with the forces of Hygeia, preventive medicine, rather than those of Asclepius, curative medicine, as those which have the greater achievement and offer the greater potential.

This book can be considered pessimistic in some respects; however, Dr. Dubos conceives of man's quest for health as a never-ending stimulus to adventure. *Mirage of Health* is an interesting and exciting book. The author's style is forceful and erudite; throughout, one can perceive the scientist and the philosopher.

WILLIAM L. KISSICK

THE LIFE OF SIR ALEXANDER FLEMING, DISCOVERER OF PENICILLIN. By André Maurois. New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1959. 286 pp., 30 illus. \$5.00.

Lady Amalia Fleming wrote to André Maurois in November 1955 and requested that he write the biography of her late husband, Sir Alexander Fleming. Perhaps, had the biographer been more familiar with Dr. Fleming during the latter's lifetime, the book might have provided the reader with a more intimate picture of this quiet and taciturn Scot. André Maurois is an author of unquestioned skill and capacity; however, the narrative seems to betray a certain lack of enthusiasm of biographer for his subject. Admittedly, Dr. Fleming was inscrutable during his lifetime and it is no doubt even more difficult to familiarize one's self with him through his papers.

This biography traces Dr. Fleming from his childhood in Ayrshire, Scotland through his medical student days at St. Mary's, his career in the laboratory of Sir Almroth Wright, his excellent work on the treatment of wounds during World War I, experiences with the "magic bullet" Salvarsan, the discovery of lysozyme, the recognition of the inhibitory properties of a penicillium mould on a culture of staphylococci, to the Nobel Prize in Medicine, honorary degrees, and many other recognitions.

Unfortunately, the greater story, which is that of penicillin, is distorted when it is presented primarily as an episode in the life of Fleming. He made the initial observation, but these observations which he reported in *The British Journal of Experimental Pathology* in 1929 contain but a part of the whole picture. Fleming had abandoned penicillin in 1932 as too "labile" for extraction or for therapeutic use. The roles played by Florey, Chain, Heatley, and others in the extraction, purification, and production of the "miracle drug" are not adequately presented.

The prerequisites for biography or autobiography are nebulous. Although the recipient of many honors and the author of much scientific work, Sir Alexander Fleming does not appear to be an ideal subject for a biography.

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